

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE  
455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 14400  
San Francisco, CA 94102

---

Contact: Gregory Dresser  
Director-Chief Counsel  
(415) 557-1200

---

FOR RELEASE  
May 20, 2019

JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE COMMISSION ISSUES DECISION AND ORDER  
IMPOSING SEVERE PUBLIC CENSURE ON JUDGE ARIADNE J. SYMONS  
PURSUANT TO STIPULATION

The Commission on Judicial Performance has issued a decision and order imposing a severe public censure upon Judge Ariadne J. Symons of the Santa Cruz County Superior Court pursuant to stipulation. Following a preliminary investigation, Judge Symons, through her counsel Kathleen M. Ewins, Esq., and Commission on Judicial Performance Director-Chief Counsel Gregory Dresser proposed a Stipulation for Discipline by Consent pursuant to Commission Rule 116.5. The Decision and Order Imposing Severe Public Censure is issued pursuant to that stipulation, which was approved by the commission.

After Judge Symons committed a red light violation that was recorded on camera, a ticket was sent to Judge Symons's residence addressed to her husband. Judge Symons assisted her husband with a court filing that was designed to have the ticket dismissed and that did not identify Judge Symons as the person who committed the red light violation. Prior to filing the document, Judge Symons took no steps to notify the police that she was the one who committed the red light violation, despite specific language on the ticket on what to do if the recipient was not the driver. Judge Symons also failed to notify the Santa Cruz County Superior Court that her husband had a matter pending before the court, regarding the red light violation, that involved her. In addition, Judge Symons misused the prestige of her office by obtaining information and assistance, in connection with her husband's court filing, from court personnel in non-public areas of the courthouse.

During jury deliberations in a felony trial, Judge Symons had an improper ex parte communication in writing with the jury. Judge Symons also had an improper ex parte communication by telephone with the deputy district attorney who tried the case. Judge Symons engaged in each of these communications outside the presence, and without the knowledge, of the defendant and his counsel. Judge Symons also failed to disclose these communications to the defendant or his counsel at any time before the jury rendered a verdict.

In a separate matter, Judge Symons addressed a party before her in a manner that was undignified and discourteous. In another matter, Judge Symons made several remarks to a litigant that reflected poor demeanor and bias toward the litigant.

The commission considered Judge Symons's history of discipline on two prior occasions as aggravating factors.

The commission's Decision and Order Imposing Severe Public Censure Pursuant to Stipulation is available on the commission's website at <http://cjp.ca.gov> (under "Pending Cases - Press Releases & Documents" and "Public Discipline & Decisions") and at the commission's office. Judge Symons is represented by Attorney Kathleen M. Ewins of San Francisco.

\* \* \*

The commission is composed of six public members, three judges and two lawyers. The chairperson is Nanci E. Nishimura, Esq.

For further information about the Commission on Judicial Performance, see the commission's website at <http://cjp.ca.gov>.